

Dear Friends in Christ,

I hope everyone is settling into our new temporary abnormal normal. I am hopeful that by the end of the month, restrictions will begin to loosen up but this will be an extraordinarily unusual Holy Week and Easter.

If you are reading this, you probably know that we will be livestreaming Palm Sunday Mass, The Mass of the Lord's Supper Holy Thursday, the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Mass. My intention is to livestream one Mass each Sunday until we can celebrate Mass with the Faithful present. The production value will not rival many that are already available since our studio is a cell phone (no free advertising as to brand.)

During this time I have found more time for prayer as well as spiritual reading. I gave up secular novels for Lent (among other things) and so have read or are reading books by Pope Benedict, Cardinal Sarah, St Robert Bellarmine, Bishop Barron, and a weighty tome on the Old Testament by Dr. John Bergsma and Grant Pitre. Well, it would be four pounds if I got the dead tree version, but since I got the dead electron version it is considerably lighter but no less weighty.

I hope that each one of you is taking this time of isolation to use positively. I realize that while my time, with Fr Smith also in the rectory, is more monastic in character than a family confined together at home might be. I have thought recently of family vacations: my parents and five kids in a Grand Torino station wagon heading to the Adirondacks. It was several hours but at least then there was an answer to, "When are we going to be there?"

We're not there yet, and we don't know when this sojourn through Coronaville will end. I do have hope that even though the virus will not be "beaten" by the end of the month, a return towards normalcy will be possible for those who are not high risk come May—a month dedicated to the Blessed Mother.

As it stands, the Church will remain open weekdays from about 6:30am until noon. On Saturday it opens around 8 until 11, then around 3 until 4. On Sunday the doors will be unlocked around 6:30, but we will have to clear the Church at 9 to be able to livestream the Mass at 9:30.

Both Father Smith and I try to spend at least an hour apiece there each morning, generally switching off. When either of us is there, we are willing to hear Confessions. One of us is usually there when the Sacrament of Confession has been scheduled normally. I am speaking with qualifiers because as pastor I am charged with ensuring that no more than 10 people are in the Church at once. If we violate the health norms I will be required to keep the church locked. So please—if you arrive and see more than 9 people, please wait outside and maintain social distancing. If you have been inside praying and notice that a number of people have tried to come in but were unable, please continue your conversation with Jesus as you leave. Thus far we haven't had issues with numbers; I pray that all who desire to make a visit are able.

Pope Francis has said, regarding these trying times:

You [Lord] are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.

Pope Francis continues on to say to each of us:

*“Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”* Faith begins when we realise we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we founder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God’s strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

I pray that each of us may reflect on the blessings that we have received and be able to experience true joy, even in this time of struggle.

I pray that each member of our parish and our community has a healthy and holy Holy week and Easter.

May God’s blessing be upon you and yours.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr Lavan